

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00
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O R 142154Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1653
INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
DIA WAHDC
USCINCSO J2 QUARRY HEIFHTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 5588

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, BGOV, BL
SUBJECT: ELECTION AFTERMATH: INCREASED POLARITY

1. SUMMARY: THE POLITICAL CLIMATE IN BOLIVIA FIVE DAYS AFTER THE JULY 9 GENERAL ELECTIONS REMAINS UNEASY. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE ARMED FORCES AND JUAN PEREDA'S UNP PARTY HAVE SHARPLY REJECTED THE CRITICAL STATEMENT ON ELECTORAL IRREGULARITIES ISSUED BY THE OBSERVERS INVITED TO BOLIVIA TO BOSSERVE THE ELECTION BY THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS. PALPABLY FRUSTRATED, OPPOSITION CANDIDATES HERNAN SILES ZUAZO, VICTOR PAZ ESTERNSSORO, AND RENE BERNAL HAVE JOINED RANKS IN REPUDIATION OF ELECTORAL FRAUD, ALTHOUGH WHAT THEY WILL DO NEXT IS NOT CLEAR. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, THE ELECTORAL COURT HAS CALLED A 24-HOUR RECESS IN COMPUTATION, ALLEGEDLY BECAUSE OF LACK OF DATA FROM THE DEPARTMENTAL COURTS. END SUMMARY

2. EMERGING FROM A NINE HOUR CABINET SESSION ON JULY 13, INTERIOR MINISTER JIMENEZ GALLO (WHO HAS A PENCHANT FOR
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INJUDICIOUS REMARKS) TOLD REPORTERS THAT "BAD BOLIVIANS" WERE THE INTELLECTUAL AUTHORS OF THE STATEMENT RELEASED JULY 11 BY THE OBSERVERS INVITED BY THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS. HE ADDED THAT THE OBSERVERS WERE GUIDED BY ULTERIOR MOTIVES AND THAT THEY HAD GRAVELY INJURED BOLIVIA'S NATIONAL DIGNITY. IN SIMILAR VEIN, THE CABINET ISSUED A STATEMENT THAT BOLIVIAN DIPLOMATS ACCREDITED TO INTERNATIONAL

ORGANIZATIONS HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO DENOUNCE THE OBSERVERS' COMMENTS AS A VIOLATION OF BOLIVIA'S SOVEREIGNTY AND AN AFFRONT TO THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-INTERVENTION SUBSCRIBED TO BY THE UN AND THE OAS.

3. THESE CONCERNS WERE ECHOED BY JUAN PEREDA'S UNP COALITION, WHICH FOLLOWED WITH A COMMUNIQUE ATTACKING THE OBSERVERS' STATEMENT FOR "PARTIALITY" AND FOR DEMONSTRATING "UNRESTRICTED SUPPORT" FOR SILES ZUAZO AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

4. THUS FAR, THERE HAS BEEN NO REACTION, OFFICIAL OR OTHERWISE, TO THE US STATEMENT EXPRESSING CONCERN ABOUT THE ALLEGATIONS OF ELECTORAL IRREGULARITIES; IT WAS BROADCAST ON RADIO (BUT NOT ON STATE-CONTROLLED TELEVISION) AT 8 PM ON JULY 13. NOR HAS THERE BEEN ANY COMMENT ON A REUTER-LATIN BULLETIN THAT ECUADOREAN OAS OBSERVER JULIO PRADO HAD HIGHLIGHTED WIDESPREAD IRREGULARITIES FAVORING PEREDA. THE THREE OAS OBSERVERS WERE QUOTED AS SAYING THE RIGHT OF PEOPLE TO ELECT THEIR GOVERNMENTS WAS GUARANTEED IN THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND THEREFORE CANNOT BE CONSIDERED AN INTERNAL AFFAIR.

5. ADDIING TO THIS ATMOSPHERE OF HEIGHTENED POLITICAL POLARITY, VICTOR PAZ ESTENSSORO MAINTAINED IN A PRESS CONFERENCE JULY 13 THAT OPPOSITION CANDIDATES ACTUALLY CARRIED ALL NINE GEOGRAPHICAL DEPARTMENTS (SILES: LA PAZ, CONFIDENTIAL

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CHUQUISACA AND POTOSI; BERNAL: ORURO AND CHOCHABAMBA; AND PAZ: TARIJA, SANTA CRUZ, BENI AND PANDO) BUT THAT PEREDA WAS WINNING THE "RECOUNT" (ESCRUTINIO). PAZ PRESENTED EVIDENCE OF A VOTE MANIPULATION AND COMMENTED THAT BOLIVIA FACED GRAVE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS WHICH A GOVERNMENT WITHOUT A BROAD POPULAR BASE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO ADDRESS EFFECTIVELY. ON A PARALLEL TACK, HERNAN ILES" UNDP, ALSO CALIMING PROOF OF WIDESPREAD FRAUD, FORMALLY REQUESTED A MEETING WITH ARMY COMMANDER VILLALPANDO. THE ARMED FORCES HIGH COMMAND, HOWEVER,DISCARDED THE POSSIBILITY OF ANY DISCUSSION WITH OPPOSITION POLITICIANS, AVERRING THAT SUPERVISION OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS WAS THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COURT. DESPITE THIS DISCLAIMER, ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF CITOR GONZALES AND TWO OTHER HIGH LEVEL OFFICERS MET WITH RENE BERNAL AND MEMBERS OF THE PDC DURING THE EVENING OF APRIL 13. ACCORDING TO A COMMUNIQUE RELEASED BY THE PDC, GONZALES AND HIS COLLEAGUES TOOK NOTE OF THE PDC'S CONCERNS AND PROMISED TO PASS THEM ON TO PRESIDENT BANZER.

6. IN AN EFFORT TO FORGE A COMMON STRATEGY, PAZ, BERNAL AND SILES ALSO MET ON JULY 13. WHAT THEY DECIDED IS NOT YET CLEAR, BUT THERE WAS ONE REPORT, PERHAPS DELIBERATELY

MISLEADING, THAT THEY PLANNED TO ASK ELECTORAL COURT PRESIDENT MANTILLA TO ANNUL THE ELECTIONS. IT WAS ALSO RUMORED THAT THEY MIGHT ATTEMPT TO ORGANIZE A GENERAL STRIKE SOME TIME DURING THE COMING WEEK. THE PURPOSE OF THE STRIKE, ACCORDING TO A FOREIGN JOURNALIST, WOULD NOT BE TO DISRUPT PUBLIC ORDER, BUT RATHER TO DEMONSTRATE THE OPPOSITION'S POWER.

7. AGAINST THIS BACKDROP OF UNCERTAINTY, NATIONAL ELECTORAL COURT PRESIDENT MANTILLA DECLARED THE COURT IN RECESS FOR 24 HOURS. IN A PRESS RELEASE, MANTILLA SAID THE REASON FOR THE RECESS WAS LACK OF DATA FROM THE DEPARTMENTAL COURTS. HE ALSO SAID THE NATIONAL COURT WOULD ONLY "ORDER AND CLASSIFY" THE RESULTS OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COURTS. IN A SEPARATE CONFIDENTIAL

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STATEMENT, HOWEVER, THE COURT CLARIFIED THAT THE "OFFICIAL" NATIONAL COMPUTATION WOULD TAKE PLACE BETWEEN JULY 21 AND 31. BOEKER

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